

Media Contact:

MediaRelations@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release**FCC CAPS EXORBITANT PHONE & VIDEO CALL RATES FOR
INCARCERATED PERSONS & THEIR FAMILIES*****The Martha Wright-Reed Act Empowered the FCC to Close Gaps in the Long-Fought-
For Protections Against Predatory Rates***

WASHINGTON, July 18, 2024—The Federal Communications Commission today voted to end exorbitant phone and video call rates that have burdened incarcerated people and their families for decades. Under the new rules, the cost of a 15-minute phone call will drop to \$0.90 from as much as \$11.35 in large jails and, in small jails, to \$1.35 from \$12.10. The new rules also, for the first time, address the exorbitant cost of video visitation calls, dropping those prices to less than a quarter of current prices and requiring per-minute rate options based on consumers' actual usage. The rules also prohibit "site commission" payments and bar added fees to incarcerated people's communications services (IPCS) services.

Communities nationwide benefit from incarcerated people staying connected to their families. The recently adopted *Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act* empowered the FCC to close the final loopholes in the communications system which has had detrimental effects on families and recidivism rates nationwide. The Act removes the principal statutory limitations that had prevented the Commission from setting comprehensive just and reasonable rates for IPCS—namely, limits to the Commission's ability to regulate rates for intrastate calls and video communications.

The new rules significantly lower existing per-minute rate caps, based on providers' reported costs, for out-of-state and international audio calls from any type of correctional facility, and apply those rate caps to in-state audio calls. And, for the first time, the rules set interim per-minute rate caps for video communications, including video visitation. The rules also lower the overall prices consumers pay by eliminating the ability to impose separate ancillary service charges.

Under the new rules, providers are prohibited from making site commission payments for IPCS and preempt state and local laws and regulations requiring such commissions. The rules also limit the costs associated with safety and security measures that can be recovered in the per-minute IPCS rates to only those costs that the Commission finds are used and useful in the provision of IPCS.

The new call rates will be \$0.06 per minute for prisons and large jails, \$0.07 for medium jails, \$0.09 for small jails, and \$0.12 for very small jails, and as low as \$0.11/minute for video calls – with a requirement that per-minute rates be offered. These changes mean existing Commission per-minute rate caps for voice services will fall by more than half for the overwhelming majority of IPCS consumers and the establishment of new, initial interim per-minute rate caps for video

communications services, such as video conferencing and video visitation. Compliance with the new rate caps will be phased in based on the size of the correctional institution and other factors.

Tier (ADP)	Audio Rate Caps (Permanent) (Per minute)		Video Rate Caps (Interim) (Per minute)	
	Current Caps	New Caps	Current Caps	New Caps
Prisons (any ADP)	\$0.14*	\$0.06	N/A	\$0.16
Large Jails (1,000+)	\$0.16*	\$0.06	N/A	\$0.11
Med. Jails (350-999)	\$0.21	\$0.07	N/A	\$0.12
Small Jails (100-349)	\$0.21	\$0.09	N/A	\$0.14
Very Small Jails (0-99)	\$0.21	\$0.12	N/A	\$0.25

* Current cap figures that include a \$0.02 additive for facility costs, which equates to the allowance made for facility-incurred IPCS costs reflected in contractually-prescribed site commissions, the closest available comparison. ADP means average daily population.

The rules also simplify the pricing structure by incorporating the costs of ancillary services into the rate caps while allowing IPCS providers to offer alternate pricing plans for IPCS. The rules strengthen IPCS accessibility requirements for incarcerated people with disabilities and the Commission's IPCS consumer disclosure rules.

Action by the Commission July 18, 2024 by Report and Order, Order on Reconsideration, Clarification and Waiver, and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 24-75).
Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Starks, Simington, and Gomez approving.
Commissioner Carr approving in part and concurring in part. Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Gomez issuing separate statements.

WC Docket Nos. 23-62, 12-375

###

Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / www.fcc.gov

*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*